Castlemaine Naturalist

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Monthly newsletter of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

White-necked Heron, Bells Swamp Photo – NY

Caterpillars to Moths – Steve Williams, 12-4-13

Steve Williams works in the Dept. of Primary Industry and has been studying moths for just four years. Curious to see how moths get into the landscape, Steve has become a moth devotee, collecting eggs and growing them on to adulthood, photographing moths and larvae at all stages and establishing a unique database of all the information he has gathered. He describes himself as a "Mothylated Spirit".

In the landscape moths, beetles, grasshoppers etc all eat plants. Moths in turn become the food source of many animals. We discussed moths in the food chain as food for birds, antechinus, lizards and wallabies. Some moths are carnivorous and eat ants and leaf hoppers. Much of Steve's work is aimed at discovering which moths feed on which host plants and which animals feed on the moths, all the time adding to his database.

Steve showed us the various coloured stages of the Golden Wattle Moth that feeds on Gorse Bitter-pea (*Daviesia ulicifolia*) and the beautiful green and white April Fool Moth that flies for just one week and feeds on Coffee Bush (*Cassinia aculeata*). He showed us the Emerald Metallic Moth and the Tiger Moth and other understorey feeding moths. There were Emperor Gum Moths and Twisted Moths that feed in trees and Snout Moths and Satin Moths that feed on Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*). And we saw moth eggs of various styles and colours that had evolved for particular situations.

Steve talked about diversity supporting diversity. He talked about the problem of too many coppiced trees and not enough large trees in the landscape, and the effect of control burns where there is no regrowth, and therefore no food source for two years in areas that take at least three seasons to restore. While other plant foods only germinate after fires.

Steve showed us a world of beauty and diversification that many of us had not realised existed in our landscape. And at the end of the evening we had the added treat of going outside to see what moths had collected on his light trap.

– Geraldine Harris

A new way forward for our forests

Geraldine Harris

Geoff and I spent two days in Tasmania in April with other Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) supporters on a tour of areas nominated for IUCN World Heritage listing in Tasmania. On Wednesday we travelled south to the southern forests of the Huon and Weld Valleys to the Tahune Airwalk and on Thursday we went north-west along the Upper Derwent to the forests of the Styx Valley to the Valley of the Giants and the Big Tree Reserve.

At both sites we were privileged to see some of the largest trees in the world, second only to the Giant Redwoods of California. These trees started growing in Tasmania at some time in history when the forest was disturbed and, because they happen to occur in a sweet spot where climate, rainfall, altitude and soil nutrients occurred in just the right measures, they grew like weeds to phenomenal heights and have managed to persist until today. ACF, the Wilderness Society and Environment Tasmania have identified more than 500,000 hectares of the state's forests that are too precious to be logged. More than half this area is heritage listed and more than 90% is of national significance.

To protect these forests ACF has been working with other environmental groups, community groups, the forestry industry, and the forestry union to come to some agreement that can benefit both native forests and forestry workers.

For the past two years they have been negotiating with these parties and, while significant progress has been made and a Forestry agreement signed in November 2012, the last hurdle is threatening all their hard work, falling short of reaching legislature due to industry demands which would sacrifice too much high conservation value forest.

At this very time Geoff and I were privileged to be present at a brief presentation by three of the main players involved in the negotiations for the current Tasmanian Forest Agreement 2012 that was currently seeking legislation in the State Parliament.

Don Henry, (CEO of Australian Conservation Foundation), Jane Calvert (National President of the Union of Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy) and Greg Hickey (Senior Resource Manager of Ta Ann, Tasmania) described how they had come together to resolve issues that had seen their respective groups in conflict for the past 40 years. Governments were failing to resolve the issues, markets were changing and a brave new approach was needed. By meeting together, often under extreme duress, 70% of common ground was identified, and eventually a formal agreement was reached in Nov 2012 – backed by Federal government support of $300 million.

Jane Calvert (National President of the Union of Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy) described herself as having a background in farming, a French Polisher by profession, and a union official since 1989. She talked about the hostile relationships and the lack of respect for workers that existed. The difference for the unions has meant that all parties have worked together to find the position they can all live with and they have sought to build a relationship after 30+ years of hostility.

This in turn has resulted in a "combined agreement" and assurance that "government will implement the agreement".

Greg Hickey (Senior Resource Manager of Ta Ann Tasmania) is the son of a Huon Valley orchardist who has worked in forestry for 30 years. A man who has always worked within the law of the land, he realised that since the 80's attitudes have changed, and requirements of produce have changed. Traditionally a conservative business, change has not happened quickly and conflict has built over time. Greg talked about his need "to go bush every now and then to be refreshed"; a need shared by many others too. He talked about how the world changes whether we like it or not; how his group were dragged into the new negotiations; about the angst and hardship involved; but how it was the only way forward. He believes there is still a great future for the forest industry but that "we need to do it differently. To sit here today would have been unheard of four years ago. We are all human, we have things that drive us, sometimes we yell and shout, but this process has involved great learning for us and shown us what really drives us.

When asked "How do you manage the communication to your shareholders/ workers?" Jane replied: "Unions have taken ballots at every key point to seek endorsement to take a particular action in order to give members a direct say as to whether we are doing the right thing. They have come with us every step of the way. Workers knew "things were changing" and when things change you want to be at the forefront. The worst kind of change is unorganised disorderly change. And ACF has not baulked at supporting the workers all the way."

Greg replied: "Within all the sectors of the Forest Industries Assoc. of Tasmania (FIAT) there is a wide range of interests and issues. 99% of the market is international and our major market is Japan. The market is demanding international standards and as a democratic organization our voters said we should support this. They understand the need for "licence" for our product."

Don replied: "Representing ACF, the Wilderness Society and Environment Tasmania (25 smaller organisations) we underwent extensive respectful discussions and achieved 95% support. It was important and the right thing to do to achieve the best outcome for the industry and the workers and by working together we have achieved a better outcome."

Don summed up saying "Sometimes government, whatever colour, finds it difficult to come up with anything other than the lowest bar. We have learnt a lot from each other. Asking those involved and talking together results in a much higher bar and a higher quality outcome. The challenge now is the legislative underpinning". Jane believes that with the three bodies working together, the power they have is much greater than acting independently and it feels good. And Greg added, "Trust between groups has been built. Don has travelled to Japan to talk for forest industry. In 30 years I never thought I would have seen that. The Australian ambassador never thought he would see it either! Even with the present legislative problem, we trust each other to work through it. We need to settle the matter and get on."

And on April 30, we received an email from Don Henry:

"Only moments ago in Hobart, Tasmania's Parliament passed the Tasmanian

Forests Agreement into law. **After decades of conflict, environmental groups, the timber industry and unions negotiated a forestry peace agreement."**

"Today's result delivers major outcomes for the **environment, industry and workers**. We didn't get everything we hoped for and Tasmanian Parliament added amendments that are weaker than we would like. After a difficult two weeks of further negotiations, ACF and our joint environmental signatories judged it better to proceed than walk away.

The commitment to a 170,000 hectare World Heritage nomination is safe. The reserves include **the Styx, Upper Florentine and Weld valleys**; the cool temperate rainforests of **the Tarkine; West Wellington and the Blue Tier**. They're home to the world's largest marsupial carnivores, the endangered Tasmanian devil, the vulnerable spotted-tailed quoll and the near-threatened eastern quoll."

On Photographing Birds

Noel Young

On Anzac day several members joined the throng at the Community hall Newstead, for the Landcare sponsored talk by well known local expert Chris Tzaros. The subject: bird photography.

With a well prepared presentation, Chris outlined the essential things to know about equipment and how to use it, weaving in many tips on how he approaches the difficult task of photographing birds successfully.

About 12 years ago Chris commenced the task in the right way – with a good SLR system featuring a high quality telephoto lens of fixed focal length and wide aperture. He emphasised that you should spend as much as the budget will allow for quality 'glass'. The camera body is of less importance. Having started using film, he soon (cautiously) made the change to digital cameras, and hasn't looked back. For several years now, it has been generally accepted that digital technology can produce better results than 35mm film, aside from the other advantages inherent in the system like ease of personal processing and so on.

If you want to progress beyond the hit or miss method (using your camera in automatic mode) you should master the understanding of more direct control – e.g. recognising when to correct exposure, and using multiple shots (if your subject is stationary) with slightly different focus points, so you can pick the best focussed shot later. This sort of thing gets easier with practice, and practice is easier (read less costly) with digital gear, so get stuck into it and experiment!

Chris prefers to stalk his birds rather than use hides, but occasionally uses call recordings (being careful not to cause stress). Tips included; wear dull clothing and stay low on approach; shoot before you close in (or you may end up with nothing); shoot from a low angle and try to isolate the bird from the background. There was much more to take in, and he finished with a slide show of a number of his superb photographs. Some great examples can be seen in his book, "Wildlife of the Box Ironbark country".

Hooded Plover encounter

Debbie Worland

A couple of weeks ago we went to Apollo Bay. I took this photo of a hooded plover on Wild Dog Beach, near Skenes Creek.

When I cropped the photo I found it was tagged so I reported the sighting to Beach Nesting Birds Conservation Officer and I received this reply;

"In early December last year we caught AW at Wild dog creek beach and this was actually a recapture of an adult which once had colour bands but had lost these over time – so when we re-caught it we found out that it was 17 years old! It is one of the oldest birds remaining on the Victorian coast and has spent the majority of its life on the beaches around Apollo Bay, having been captured at Point Franklin and then being seen at Shelley beach Apollo Bay before settling at Wild Dog. In December, we also caught one of its chicks and put a metal band only on this. Both of these chicks made it through which is wonderful!"

Meeting to establish an Australian Naturalists Network

Interim Steering Committee (ANN ISC) Blackburn. 13.4.13.

Geraldine Harris

The Australian Naturalists Network ANN was established to foster and promote contact between Field Naturalist Clubs and other natural history groups throughout Australia. **Dick and Shirley Southcombe**, Geelong Field Naturalists Club members, organised the first ANN Get-together in Alice Springs in 2000 and since then they have done an outstanding job organising host clubs for ANN Get-togethers every two years in Launceston, WA, Harrietville/ Jyndabyne, NT, Queensland and Canberra. Optional pre and post Get-together excursions were often arranged on these occasions for those able to extend their stay.

Dick's health has not been so good of late and he was unable to attend the 2012 Get-together in Canberra. A meeting held at the conclusion of that Get-together agreed to form an ANN Interim Steering Committee comprising past and present South East Australian Naturalists Association (SEANA) committee members and states and territories representatives, who have attended at least one ANN Get-together.

At the meeting in Blackburn in April an ANN Interim Steering Committee was

formed as a subgroup of SEANA to coordinate and oversee future activities of the network. . A statement of purpose for ANN was drawn up for consideration and a subcommittee formed to investigate the pros and cons of setting up as a legal entity representative of field naturalist clubs and other natural history groups from all states and territories. Another subcommittee is to consider a possible constitution for ANN. However if ANN is set up as a subgroup of SEANA this task could be held in abeyance until a future date.

It was agreed that host clubs should be seen as the bodies organising ANN Get-togethers and as such must ensure that they are covered by public liability insurance and be incorporated. Individual members participating in ANN events must be affiliated with a registered naturalist club.

John Gregurke volunteered to set up an initial ANN website and, with assistance, to update the ANN register of natural history clubs.

The next ANN Get-together will be hosted by the Tasmanian Field Naturalist Club from18-26 October 2014 in Hobart: and the 2016 ANN Get-together, will be hosted by the WA Naturalists Club in the spring of that year. The next meeting of the ANN ISC is to be held in March 2014.

NB: Information about the 2014 ANN Get-together will be made available to members in future newsletters as it is available.

Introducing Matt Sheehan

The speaker for the May CFNC General Meeting is Matt Sheehan, who runs a business in Castlemaine called 'Wild Matters'. Matt is the former National Chilean Needle Grass Facilitator, and still regularly works on a variety of invasive species issues for all levels of government. Matt will talk about his interest in botany, starting from Castlemaine Secondary College (including field classes with Ern Perkins), and his journey from there through his degree, honours, PhD and the then his professional experiences at Catchment Management Authorities, state agencies and now as a consultant. His talk will focus on invasive species and draw on examples from his research, policy and community work to show the importance of this work in protecting native vegetation and supporting the work of community groups like the field naturalist clubs.

Swift Parrot movements

Noel Young

Swift parrot reports from the Birdline website in April:

- 4th – 11 birds at Welshmans Reef – Geoff Park's first sighting
- 8th – 6 at Muckleford – Deb Worland
- 12th – 12 at Muckleford – Deb Worland
- 14th -- 7 in Muckleford area
- 20th – 2 flying at Ocean Grove – Tom Fletcher
- 22nd – 12+ in Killawarra forest
- 23rd – 24th - approx 100 at Ocean Grove
- 25th – 12 feeding in Leucoxylon rosea - Deb Worland

Observations – Denis Hurley

March 10th
Watched paper wasps 12.30 pm and very hot, collecting water from bird bath to bring back to nest 30 m away under a window ledge – one wasp was drinking then plunged under for a few seconds, floated to the surface and fly back to nest – a different approach!

April 8th
At 11.45am Heard a magpie giving a "nervous call" 10m up a medium yellow gum in the backyard. Finally spotted a Tawny Frogmouth, *Podargus strigoides* close to the trunk; obtained some good pictures. At 1.30 pm, a pair of Crimson Rosellas *Platycercus elegans* were also eyeing off the rigid shape. One rotter flew down and bounced the Frogmouths branch, then they flew off (mean!). Frogmouth left about 6.45 that evening.

April 9th Put some windfall apple pieces in bird feeder for possum mum and baby (brushtails) while watching at 8.45 - mum climbed from the tray with apple and baby on back and dropped the apple which landed on the tray. Mum then proceeded to haul the chain paw over paw up to her and re-grabbed the apple. I was so gob-smacked I forgot to take a photo!

Observations – Richard Piesse

Kororoit Ck walk – birds sighted 3-4-13 – Greater Egret, Little Pied Cormorant, Black Duck, Moorhen, Scarlet Robin, S. Blue Wren, Crested Pigeon, New Holland Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird

Wombat Forest walk 7-4-13 - *Cassinia aculeata*, *Wahlenbergia stricta*, *Geranium* sp., *Goodenia ovata, Epacris impressa, Eriochilus cucullata, Olearia argophylla, Monotoca scoparia*

Observations

- Reports at the April meeting -
- At Chewton - Jacky Winter, Brown headed Honeyeater, **Blue faced Honeyeater**, Red-browed Finch, Silvereye, and Black Cockatoos (3) And a report of a wombat going into Woodbrook Forest - Lorraine Le Plastrier
- Chris Timewell reported a male **Rose Robin** seen recently along the creek in the Botanical Gardens
- Geraldine Harris passed specimens around of an unknown scat and ant detritus from a ceiling beam in the house. She has found Parsons Bands on the property recently, and since January has been visited by White – browed Babblers, and more recently Eastern Shrike-tits
- Denis H encountered a healthy looking Brown Snake coming toward him in the yard, and watched it rapidly disappear down a small hole
- Other discussions around Blue banded bees, a Sacred Kingfisher, and a pair of Black Wallabies apparently playing together

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme
May 2013

Fri May 10 meeting: speaker MAT SHEEHAN - *"Reflections on the importance of invasive species research, policy development and action for the protection of native ecosystems"*

Sat May 11 field trip: to be decided
Sat May 18 roadside clean-up – meet 9am at the Iron works, just past the Maldon Rd junction on the Newstead Rd.

Fri June 14 meeting: speaker LYNNE KELLY on spiders

Thank you to all members who have renewed subscriptions promptly. Please check if yours is still outstanding, and forward to the treasurer c/o the club's box address (below).

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 7.30 pm.
Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.
Business meetings - fourth Thursday of each month, except December, at George Broadways; 24a Greenhill Ave., at 7.30 pm. Members are invited to attend.

Subscriptions for 2013
Ordinary membership: Single $30, Family $40
Pensioner or student: Single $25, Family $30
Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

2013 Committee

Rita Mills (President)			5472 4553
George Broadway (Secretary)	georgebroadway@bigpond.com		5472 2513
Nigel Harland (Treasurer)	5474 8246	Barbara Guerin	5472 1994
Chris Morris	0418 996 289	Richard Piesse	0448 572 867
Chris Timewell	5472 1553	Noel Young (Editor)	5472 1345

[email newsletter material to: **noel.young@optusnet.com.au**]

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc. PO Box 324, Castlemaine, 3450.
Inc #A0003010B